

**TABLE H. IDENTIFYING CHILDREN WHO LIVE WITH VIOLENCE**

As domestic violence escalates in our society, the role of healthcare providers in enhancing awareness, identification and referral is a critical component in the process of assisting children who are victims of violence. This document can assist in identifying children who are involved in and at risk for domestic violence. *Developed by the 12th Judicial Court Family Violence Coordinating Council and Illinois EMSC, updated 2013.*

### CHARACTERISTICS/BEHAVIORS OF CHILDREN LIVING WITH VIOLENCE

#### INFANTS & TODDLERS (0-2½ years):

- Developmental delay
- Failure to thrive
- Emotional withdrawal
- Physical problems (frequent illness)

#### PRE-SCHOOLERS (3-6 years):

- Developmental delay (especially in language)
- Low tolerance, easily frustrated
- Acting out, aggressive towards peers/adults
- Low self-esteem
- Abnormal startle response

#### SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN (7-11 years):

- Poor school performance, delay
- Behavior problems with peers/adults
- Aggressive acting out, purposeful and severe
- Fearful, nightmares, night terrors
- Abnormal startle responses
- Withdrawn, depressed, despondent
- Chronic physical complaints
- Chronic low self-esteem
- Beginning to mimic adult roles

#### ADOLESCENTS (12-17 years):

- Depressed
- Signs of physical injuries including scars
- Aggressive
- Delinquent behavior, including running away
- Poor school adjustment
- Alcohol/drug experimenting or use
- Possessive/jealous of girlfriends/boyfriends
- Sexual activity
- Violence expanded to the community
- Proficient at mimicking adult behavior
- Death by suicide or murder

#### INDICATORS OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE:

- Acting out behaviorally
- Taking responsibility for the abuse
- Low self-esteem
- Constant fear of another beating/abuse
- Fear of abandonment
- Feelings of guilt over inability to stop the abuse

#### INDICATORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE:

- Child reports abuse
- Overly compliant
- Can't make friends
- Extreme fear of males
- Lack of trust
- No participation in school or social activities
- Can't concentrate
- Sudden drop in grades
- Very withdrawn or depressed
- Delinquent behavior
- Self-destructive or suicidal
- Sexually aggressive
- Seductive behavior
- Inappropriate sexual play with peers, toys and themselves
- Age-inappropriate understanding of sexual behavior
- Sleep disturbances including bed wetting and nightmares
- Secretive behavior
- Hints about sexual behavior
- Arriving early/staying late at school

#### PHYSICAL INDICATORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE:

- Torn or bloody underclothes
- Pain, swelling or itching of genitals
- Pain when urinating
- Discharge from vagina or penis

#### NON-AGE SPECIFIC BEHAVIORS INCLUDE:

- |                                   |   |                             |
|-----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| ■ Little or no empathy for others | ■ Sleeping in class regularly           | ■ Absence of emotions       |
| ■ Loses control easily            | ■ Blames others for own action          | ■ Boys may be undisciplined |
| ■ Girls may be overly compliant   | ■ Uses force/violence to solve problems |                             |

## IDENTIFYING CHILDREN WHO LIVE WITH VIOLENCE (CONTINUED)

### IN CASE OF DISCLOSURE:

- How you react is important! Remain calm.
- Provide verbal reassurance to:
  - a) assure the child it is correct to disclose
  - b) assure the child he/she is not responsible
  - c) assure the child he/she is believed
  - d) assure the child he/she is not alone
- Avoid projecting your reaction onto the child
- Do not assume the child knows that the abuse is a problem.
- Remain relaxed.
- Be empathetic.
- Do not be judgmental.
- Explain the need to contact others who can protect the child and help resolve the problem.
- Contact the Montana CFSD hotline at:  
1-866-820-KIDS or 1-866-820-5437.

### HOW TO REPORT TO ILLINOIS DCFS:

- Call the Montana Centralized Intake Hotline at:  
1-866-820-KIDS or 1-866-820-5437.
- Information needed:
  - a) name
  - b) date of birth
  - c) address
  - d) phone
  - e) information on siblings
  - f) parent/caregiver name
- State you are a mandated reporter.
- State if you think it is an emergency.
- State why you think the child is abused/neglected (report factual information, not conclusions). Document name of hotline worker and date/time called.
- Ask the local investigative worker to call you back if needed.
- Your report will be investigated within 24-72 hours. Your name is not given to those being investigated. Confidentiality of a mandated reporter's identity is protected by law.

## RESOURCES

**MONTANA CENTRALIZED INTAKE HOTLINE.....1-866-820-KIDS (820-5437)**  
**NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE.....1-800-799-SAFE (7233)**  
**CRIME VICTIM ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.....1-800-228-3368**

### OTHER LOCAL RESOURCES

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